# BEYOND THE WALL OF RESISTANCE

## Rick Maurer

# RESISTANCE IN ORGANIZATIONS

WHAT IS RESISTANCE?

Resistance is a force that slows or stops movement. It is a natural and expected part of any change. Any system, whether the human body or an organization, resists any change that it believes will be harmful.

THE IMPACT OF RESISTANCE

\#      According to Fortune 500 senior executives, resistance is the primary reason changes fail inside organizations. (Across the Board. 1992)

\#      These same executives said that more than one-half of organizational changes failed.

\#      Less than one-half of quality improvement initiatives succeed. (Zenger Miller. 1994)

\#      Hammer and Champy (Reengineering the Corporation) admit that they were not prepared for the amount of resistance they found to reengineering. (Wall Street Journal. 1995) Some estimates suggest that up to two-thirds of reengineering projects fail.

\#      Less than thirty percent of software development applications succeed. (Application Development Trends. 1995)

# CHANGE EQUATION

David Gleicher created a simple and elegant equation to describe change in organizations. (Often this equation is attributed to his professor, Richard Beckhard.)

$$SD \times V \times FS > R = C$$

Shared Dissatisfaction times Vision times First Steps is greater than Resistance equals Change.

Since it is an equation, everything turns to zero if one element is missing and resistance takes over. Gleicher contends (and I agree) that there must be sufficient shared dissatisfaction with the status quo, a clear sense of where you want to go, combined with the beginning of a plan to meet this goal.

# CYCLE OF CHANGE

THE CYCLE OF CHANGE

If we understand that change often follows a cyclic path, it is easier to predict potential resistance. Once we know where we are in the cycle, we begin to see options.

The cycle of change can
! help us appreciate that change is cyclic and that nothing lasts forever.
! explain why resistance is occurring.
! help us predict the consequences of continuing to use the same strategies.
! point to alternatives to the current course of action.

There are six steps in the cycle: Random Incidents, Recognition, Initial Action, Implementation, Integration, and Waning Activity.

Random Incidents ("one o'clock" on the cycle). There is very little information about the need for change. In the case of the paper plants, there may have been some reports of quality problems. When senior management realized there was a problem, most staff were still at one o'clock, unaware of the problem.

Recognition (three o'clock). Someone recognizes that there is a problem or an opportunity.

Recognition is the most critical stage of the cycle. Once everyone sees the same picture of the situation, it becomes possible to get everyone aligned to move around the cycle together. Organizational consultant Kathie Dannemiller speaks about the importance of the shift that occurs when everyone Recognizes the situation. When this shift occurs, people's views are transformed. They begin to see the world from others' points of view. The shift is a realization that we are in this together. We Recognize the need for action.

Initial Actions (five o'clock). Once we recognize the issue, energy builds -- we want to get busy and do something.

Implementation (seven o'clock). During this stage, the idea is rolled out.

Integration (nine o'clock). At this stage, the idea becomes part of the way we do business.

If the change were a fairy tale, this stage would end with "and they all lived happily ever after." But this tale is a grimmer tale, as life and the cycle move on.

Waning Activity (eleven o'clock). Nothing lasts forever. Even the best plans eventually run their course.

The transition from Integration to Waning Activity is important. Often we hang onto a old idea far too long. It's not that the idea is bad; it is simply time for the cycle to move on.

As much as we might want progress to be linear -- one thing building on another in an inexorable rise toward perfection -- it is most often cyclic. Today's award-winning idea can become tomorrow's joke. No stage lasts forever.

Each stage of the cycle has in it the seeds of its own destruction. For example, Implementation won't last forever. It will inevitably lead to Integration or failure. Waning Activity leads to either renewal or an ending. And on it goes.

This cycle is adapted with permission from the Cycle of Experience developed at the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland

## CYCLE OF CHANGE

# THREE LEVELS OF RESISTANCE

## LEVEL 1  -- INFORMATION

    LACK OF INFORMATION

    DISAGREEMENT WITH THE IDEA ITSELF

    LACK OF EXPOSURE

## LEVEL 2 -- EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO <u>THIS</u> CHANGE

Could come from any of the following. . .

    LOSS OF POWER

    LOSS OF STATUS

    LOSS OF FACE OR RESPECT

    MADE TO SEEM INCOMPETENT

    DISRUPTS A WELL-INGRAINED STATUS QUO

    MISTRUST IN THOSE LEADING THE CHANGE

    FEAR OF ISOLATION OR ABANDONMENT

    WORN OUT (TOO MUCH CHANGE)

## LEVEL 3 -- DEEPLY ENTRENCHED -- BIGGER THAN THIS CHANGE

    PERSONAL HISTORY

    CULTURAL, ETHNIC, RACIAL, GENDER

    SIGNIFICANT DISAGREEMENT OVER VALUES

# DEFAULT REACTIONS

The following automatic reactions for dealing with resistance usually make matters worse since they often:

- &lt;      Increase Resistance
- &lt;      Fail to Create Synergy
- &lt;      Create Fear and Suspicion
- &lt;      Cause Pyrrhic Victories

USE OF POWER

MANIPULATION

FORCE OF REASON

IGNORE IT

PLAY OFF RELATIONSHIPS

MAKE DEALS

KILL THE MESSENGER

GIVE IN TOO SOON

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# TOUCHSTONES ASSESSMENT

Provide two responses to each item. First, indicate with an "X" how you would score your group in relationship to a particular stakeholder today. Second, indicate with an "Y" your skills or knowledge of ways to address this touchstone.

## Build Strong Relationships

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

Poor Relationships            Neutral            Always Working to Strengthen
           Relationships

## Maintain Clear Focus

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

Seldom See Forest and            Able to Work With Current Reality
Trees at Same Time            And Vision Simultaneously

## Embrace Resistance

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

Avoid Conflict and            Variety of Strategies for
Disagreement            Identifying and Discussing
           Resistance

## Respect Those Who Resist

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

They Would Say We Do            They Would Say We Have
Not Respect Them            Tremendous Respect for Them

## Relax (Calm Under Pressure)

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

Usually Unable to Remain            Many Strategies For Staying
Relaxed and Calm When            Relaxed
We Meet

## Join with the Resistance (Seek Mutually Beneficial Solutions)

!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!_____!

Win-Lose Confrontations            Many Instances of Finding
           Ways to Meet Mutual
           Interests

## What are the implications of these scores?

## Where must we focus our attention in the short-term? And in the long-term?

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# SOME STRATEGIES THAT BUILD SUPPORT FOR CHANGE

## "WHAT IF?" SCENARIOS

A "What If?" Scenario is used in large construction projects where many different contractors must work together to ensure the project is completed on time and within budget. This process has saved the US Army Corp of Engineers millions.

Here's how it works. At the beginning of the project, representatives from all the critical groups meet to:

1. Identify potential conflicts or trouble spots.

2. Mixed groups develop "what if?" strategies. What will we do if Y happens? If Z happens?

3. Full group decides on strategies.

## REAL TIME STRATEGIC CHANGE

This approach, developed by Dannemiller-Tyson, gets "the whole system" in the room. Hundreds of people meet for three days to craft a clear vision and implementation plan for meeting goals. RTSC can take an entire organization from Random Incidents (one o'clock) to Initial Actions (five o'clock) in just three days. The process focuses on a proposal of what the change would look like (nine o'clock). For more information, read Real Time Strategic Change, Robert Jacobs, Barrett-Kohler, 1995.

Real Time Strategic Change has a few key elements that can be used in other types of meetings as well:

\#       Uses trial balloon proposals

\#       Gets "whole system" in the room

\#       Uses max-mix groups

\#       Glad -- Mad -- Add allows people to influence

# WORK OUT

This was GE's response to lowered morale and productivity after massive downsizing in the late '80s. It gets issues up on the table, but demands that people offer a solution to the problems they raise. In other words, the process assists organizations in "working out" problems. Movement from Random Incidents to Initial Actions is possible. See Large Group Interventions for more information.

1. Get everyone in the room.

2. Limit comments to a single issue.

3. All complaints must be tied to solutions.

4. Decide on suggestions within 72 hours.

5. Champion makes sure idea is implemented.

# FUTURE SEARCH

This approach, developed by Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff, pulls together 60 to 70 people to create a common statement of a "preferred future." It is a strong process for getting multiple interests talking about what they want and making agreements. In 2 1/2 days the group can move from Random Incidents to Recognition, with a clear picture of what Integration (nine o'clock) would look like. For more information, read *Future Search*, Weisbord and Janoff. Barrett-Kohler. 1995.

# STRUCTURED DIALOGUE

This was developed by physicist David Bohm. Structured dialogue slows down conversation in order to get at underlying assumptions and values. It can be a very effective process for getting at issues that are blocking progress between groups. Dialogue can move a group from Random Incidents to Recognition. It should never be mixed in with decision making, since people will flip into advocacy roles and quit listening. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, Peter Senge et. al. includes a few short sections on the process.

# THE CONFERENCE MODEL

Develop by Dick and Emily Axelrod, this is a series of two to three day meetings, beginning with future search, that take an organization from visioning, through design, to implementation. When it is successful, the organization moves from one to seven o'clock on the cycle. For more information, read Large Group Interventions, Bunker and Alban, Jossey-Bass, 1996.

# HOW INDIVIDUALS CAN USE THE TOUCHSTONES

## EMBRACE RESISTANCE

\#        Mea Culpa (Apologize)

\#        Listen to the unspoken (Level 2 signals)
                -body language
                - emotion in tone of voice
                - silence

\#        Put self in their shoes

\#        Ask them directly what's of concern.

                - informal face-to-face

                - anonymous surveys

                - groupware

                - focus groups

## RESPECT THOSE WHO RESIST

\#        Give people sufficient time to tell their stories.

\#        Paraphrase.

\#        Stick with those who resist. Stay connected to them no matter how difficult.

\#        Demonstrate that you understand what concerns them. (This does not suggest that you must agree with their assessment of the situation.)

\#        Remain open to learning from them.

## RELAX

\#       Pick a place where you feel comfortable.

\#       Prepare

\#       Use a coach to talk through the meeting.

\#       Rehearse

\#       Design a structure for the meeting.

\#       Get enough sleep. Eat right. Meditate. Stay sober.

## JOIN WITH THE RESISTANCE

\#       Explore the differences fully.

\#       Listen for common concerns.

\#       Look for opportunities to reframe the situation into a win-win.

\#       Ask for their help in making this a win-win.

\#       Allow them to influence the initial proposal.

# RESOURCES

*http://www.beyondresistance.com.* Our website offers many articles and assessment tools you can print and use without charge. *Tools for a Change.* This is a monthly on-line newsletter that offers ideas and tips you can use to build support for change. For a free subscription, send an e-mail to sandy@beyondresistance.com.

*Beyond the Wall of Resistance: Unconventional Strategies That Build Support for Change.* Rick Maurer. Bard Press. Austin, TX. 1996.

*Go For Growth.* Robert Tomasko. John Wiley. New York. 1996

*Future Search.* Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff. Barrett-Kohler. San Francisco. 1995.

*The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook.* Peter Senge et. al. Currency Doubleday. New York. 1994.

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*Lessons From the Field: Applying Appreciative Inquiry.* Hammond and Roal, editors. Practical Press. 1998.

*The Human Equation: Building Profits By Putting People First.* Jeffrey Pfeffer, Harvard Business School Press 1998. Cambridge.

*The Open-Book Experience: Lessons From Over 100 Companies Who Successfully Transformed Themselves.* John Case. Addison-Wesley. Reading. 1998.

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**Rick works with organizations that want to build support for change and with leaders and managers who need to increase their capacity to plan and implement new initiatives.**

The success of new projects, reorganizations, mergers, and quality efforts demand full commitment from the people who must implement these initiatives. Through executive coaching, project planning meetings, interdepartmental team building, and management development, Rick consults to leaders and their teams on ways to handle these change more effectively.

Rick's specialty is transforming resistance into support for new initiatives. Since publication of his book, *Beyond the Wall of Resistance: Unconventional Strategies That Build Support for Change*, he has been seen on NBC Nightly News, CNBC, Fox News in New York, quoted in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune*, *Industry Week*, *The Economist*, and a guest on many radio and television programs throughout the country. Many organizations use *Beyond the Wall of Resistance* as a foundation for building sound change management practices.

His first book, *Caught in the Middle: A Leadership Guide for Partnership in the Workplace* is a guidebook for managers on ways to increase commitment to quality and service. *Quality Digest* said that Rick's book, ". . . provides an excellent departure point for those managers stranded somewhere between old responsibilities and their new roles." His second book, *Feedback Toolkit,* is a perennial best-seller for the publisher.

Rick has consulted to managers and staff from organizations as diverse as America Online, Marriott, Tulane University Hospital, Adventist Healthcare, Bell Atlantic, Fannie Mae, MCI, MTV Networks, Charles Schwab, District of Columbia Public Schools, the government of Guyana, the International Monetary Fund, as well as many federal and local agencies.

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